

# THE BATTLE=CRY

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## SYNOPSIS.

Juanita Holland, a Philadelphia young woman of wealth, on her journey with her guide, Good Anse Talbott, into the heart of the Cumberlands, to become a teacher of the mountain children, faints at the door of Fletch McNash's cabin. While resting there she overhears a talk between Bad Anse Havey, chief of his clan, and one of his henchmen that acquaints her with the Havey-McBriar feud. Juanita has an unprofitable talk with Bad Anse and they become antagonists.

## CHAPTER II—Continued.

"It's Havey," he said slowly, "but hereabouts I've got another name that's better known." He paused, then added with a hardened timbre of voice, as though bent on making defiant what would otherwise sound like confession: "It's Bad Anse."

The girl recoiled, as though under a physical shock. It seemed to her that every way she turned she was to meet staggering disappointments. She had spoken almost pleadingly to the man with whom she could make no terms—the man whose arrogant power and lawless influence she must break and paralyze before her own regime could find standing-room in these hills.

Yet, as she looked at him standing there, and stiffened resolutely, she could say nothing except "Oh!"

Into the monosyllabic crept many things: repulsion, defiance and chagrin for her mistake, and in recognition of them all the bronzed features of the man hardened a little and into the cool eyes snapped a sparkle of the sleeping fires she had divined.

"I made my suggestion to the wrong man," she said steadily. "I misunderstood you. I thought you said you wanted peace."

He swung himself to the saddle again; then, as he gathered up his reins, he turned, and in his utterance was immovable steadiness and glacial coldness, together with a ring of contempt and restrained anger.

"I did say that, and by God Almighty, I meant just what I said. I do want peace in these mountains—but I ain't never found no way yet to get peace without fightin' for it."

She saw him ride away into the moonlight, with his shoulders very straight and the battered felt hat very high, and she looked neither to right nor left as he went until the mists had swallowed him.

For a long time while she sat there on the stile gazing across the steep banks between which the waters of Tribulation slipped along in a tide of tarnished quicksilver and beyond which rose the near ridges of blue and the far, dim ridges of gray.

At her back she knew that the family and the missionary were sitting in talk.

She sat there with her hands clasped about her updrawn knees as she used to sit when some childhood grief had weighed upon her.

She could not shake out of her mind the humiliation of having shown her weakest side to Bad Anse Havey. It was some satisfaction to remember the offended stiffening of his shoulders and the smoldering fire in his eyes. She had heard much of these mountain men—a pride which made them walk in strange surroundings with upright heads and eyes, challenging criticism of their uncouthness. She had first appealed to this man, but at least she had also stung him with her scorn. Now they would be open enemies.

She knew that this young man, in a country where every man was poor and no man a pauper, owned great tracts of land that yielded only sparse crops with the most arduous coaxing. She knew that under his rocky acres slept a great wealth of coal, and that above them grew noble and virgin forests of hardwood. The coming of railroads and development would make him a rich man. Yet he stood there, seemingly prizing above all those magnificent certainties the empty boast of feudal chieftainship. Yet he was a man. With that thought came an unwelcome comparison. She thought of someone whom she had loved—and sent away—and of their leave-taking. That man had had every gentle attribute which this man lacked. All that universities, travel and ancestry can give had shown out in his bearing, his manners, his voice and the expression of his eyes.

There had been a time when she had wavered in her determination to devote herself to the mission for which she had been educated. She thought that this man might be more important than any mission; that a life with him might be full enough. Then had come the discovery, which at first she had rebelliously denied, but which forced itself hatefully upon her realization. Despite his unchallengeable charm and gentility, he was, after all, not quite a man. When she had admitted that beyond dispute, she had turned, sickened, from the life which she could not contemplate without him. The man whom she thought she loved was empty and fine, like a swordless sheath. Very well, she would turn to the work of putting an edge on the sturdier metal of raw humanity.

Her grandfather's fortune, or fortunes, since the plural rather than the singular fitted their dimensions, had come to her with his wish that part of them should go to advance education in the Alleghenies. She was to be his stewardess in overseeing the work, but that she should go in person and permanently to that crude environment had not been anticipated. Those who had known her in her life of normal luxury, of dancing and playing, and of deliciously rhythmic personality, would have laughed at the idea as absurdly incongruous. Of this fact the young man had heatedly reminded her on the night when she gave back his engagement ring and announced her determination.

"Juanita," he had expostulated, with a suffering of hopelessness in his eyes which she ached to comfort—"Juanita, dearest, courts and juries and the bayonets of militiamen have struggled to civilize those savage people, and for a hundred years they have utterly failed. Their one god is Implacable Hatred."

"I shan't go with juries or bayonets," she had retorted.

"You will go without knowing them, their ways, their point of view."

"I don't know them now, but I will know them."

"You haven't even a letter of introduction."

"I never heard"—her voice rang with a note against which he knew the futility of argument—"that the Savior needed letters of introduction."

And so an imagined heartbreak and a crumbling world of illusions—as she had called—had driven her suddenly into self-appointed exile—and a mission.

Her education had been pointed to fitting her to oversee such work—done by the hands of others. Even then, had not he and all the rest goaded her with their insistent refrain, "You can't do it?" Now she was here.

She drew herself up straight as she sat on the stile and impatiently dashed away the moisture from her eyes. If that other man had only had in him the iron wasted on this desperado, Anse Havey! She rose at last and went unwillingly back to the cabin.

The host sat barefooted before the fire and talked with the missionary. The girl heard their conversation through the dullness of fatigue, wondering how she was to sleep in this pigsty, yet restrained from asking permission to retire only by her embarrassment and unfamiliarity with the native code.

At last she heard Brother Talbott suggest: "Hit's gittin' ter be late an' we've got a to'able long way ter journey tomorrow. I reckon we'd better lay down."

Juanita began counting heads. There were six in the room, and the boy Jeb was yet to return from the dance, and while she was still trying to work out the problem the woman pointed to a corner bed and suggested: "I reckon you'd better bundle in with Dawn."

She saw the girl crawl into bed just as she was and the mission-



"You Haven't Even a Letter of Introduction."

any kick off his brogans and shed his coat. Taking off her own boots and jacket, she slipped between the faded "comforters" of the sheetless couch.

In five minutes the taper was out and the place was silent save for the crackling of the logs. The little girl at her side lay quiet, and her regular breathing proclaimed her already asleep. In another five minutes Juanita, with closed eyes and burning lids and aching muscles, heard the nasal chorus of snoring sleepers. She alone was awake in the house.

## CHAPTER III.

It is related in the history of the Hatfield-McCoy feud, which burst out between neighbors over a stray pig,

and claimed its toll of lives through half a century, that one of the Hatfield girls wrote on a white pillar at the front of her often bereaved house: "There is no place like home." The sequel tells that a cynical traveler passing that way reflected on the annals of that dwelling and added in postscript: "Leastways not this side of hell."

The story of the Hatfield-McCoy feud is in many ways that of other "wars" which have made of the roof-tree of the eastern divide a land beleaguered and unquiet.

In the war between the Haveys and the McBriars there was more than the forgotten episode of a stray razorback which was not surrendered to its lawful owners. They had for decades hated and killed each other with a fidelity of bitterness that made all their truces and intermarriages fail of permanent peace.

Between the territories where they had originally settled stretched a barrier of hills broken by only one gap. The McBriars had made their first habitations east of that ridge and gap where the waters ran toward the sea.

The Haveys had set up their power to the west, where the creeks and springs fed the rivers that went down to the Blue-Grass and to Tennessee. Had the two clans been content to remain respectively on the sunrise and sunset slopes of the backbone, they might never have clashed, but there were bright-eyed women to the west and east. Feminine Havey eyes lured McBriar suitors, and McBriar girls seemed to the Havey men worth any dare that fate might set. So it has been since young Montagues and Capulets ignored deadlines—and long before. Smoke went up from cabins on both sides that housed men and women of both clans. Hatred scattered and set up new points of infection all along Tribulation and beyond its headwaters.

In Civil War and subsequent politics a line of fierce cleavage had yawned between them—and each faction had been a power. It was to the leadership of such a clan that Bad Anse had succeeded when hardly twenty-one by the death of a father whose end had not come upon a bed of illness. It was to the herding of such a flock that he had ridden away from the cabin of Fletch McNash on the night when the girl's scornful taunt followed him.

It was an unfortunate thing that Cal Douglas should, on a February afternoon, have shot to death his brother-in-law, Noah Watt, even if, as Cal earnestly assured the jury, "he was jest obliged an' beholden ter do it." All the circumstances of the affair were inopportune for his kinsman and the kinsmen of the man who died with a bullet through his vitals.

Cal bore a name for surly character, and even in a land where grudge-bearing is a religion he was deemed ultra-fanatical in fanning the flame of hatred. Noah Watt himself was little loved by either the Haveys, into whose family he had married, or the McBriars, from whom he sprang. Neighbors told of frequent and violent bickerings between the man and his shrewish wife, who was the twin sister of Cal Douglas.

"Cal Douglas an' Noey Watt's women air es much alike es two peas in a pod," went neighborhood pronouncement. "They air both soured on mankind an' they glories in human misery."

Had the fight on that winter evening ended in the death of both participants, McBriars and Haveys would alike have called it a gentle riddance and dropped the matter where it stood. But since a Havey had slain a McBriar and the Havey still lived it could not, in honor, be so dropped. It left an uneven score.

Since the mountaineer has little to do in the winter and spring save gossip, the affair grew in importance with rehearsing, and to each telling was added new features. It was significantly pointed out east of the ridge that Noah had incurred the displeasure of Bad Anse Havey by the suspicion of tale-bearing to old Milt McBriar. It was argued that the particular wife-beating which led to the tragedy might have passed as uneventful as several similar episodes heretofore, had not the heads of the Haveys made it a pretext for eliminating a McBriar who dwelt in their midst and carried news across the ridge to his own people.

For several years the feud had slept; not the complete sleep of death, but the fitful, simmering sleep of cautious animosity. But neither clan felt so overwhelmingly strong as to court an issue just yet and, realizing the desperate quality of any outbreak, both Milt McBriar "over yon" and Anse Havey over here had guarded the more belligerent kinsmen with jealous eyes. They had until now held them checked and leashed, though growling.

For these reasons the trial of Cal Douglas had been awaited with a sense of crisis in the town of Peril, where it might mean a pitched battle. So it had been awaited, too, up and down the creeks and branches that crept from the ragged hills, where men were leading morbid lives of isolation and nursing grudges.

During the three days that the suspense continued each recess of court found the long-limbed frame of Milt McBriar tilted back in a split-bottom chair on the flagstones at the front of the hotel. His dark face and piercing eyes gazed always thoughtfully and very calmly off across the dusky town to the reposeful languor of the piled-up, purple skyline. Likewise, each recess found seated at the other end of the same house-front the shorter, heavier figure of a fair-haired man with ruddy face and sandy mustache. Never did he appear there without two companions, who remained at his right and left. Never did the dark giant speak to the florid man, yet never did either fail to keep a glance directed toward the other.

The man of the sandy hair was Breck Havey, next to Bad Anse the most influential leader of the clan. His influence here in Peril made or unmade the officers of the law.

When these two men came together as opposing witnesses in a homicide case the air was fraught with elements of storm.

"Thar's war a-brewin'," commented a native, glancing at the quietly seated figures one noon. "An' them fellers air in their bilin'."

## CHAPTER IV.

Physical exhaustion will finally tell, even over such handicaps as a mountain leather bed and the fumes of a backwoods cabin.

If Juanita Holland did not at last actually fall asleep, she drifted into a sort of nightmare coma from which she awoke with a start.

Finally she fell again into that half sleep which dreams of wakefulness. It may have lasted minutes or hours, but suddenly she roused again with a start from a new nightmare and lay trembling under the oppression of a poignant foreboding. What was it that she had subconsciously heard or imagined? She was painfully wide awake in the slumbering cabin. At last she was sure of a sound, low but instinct with warning.

Beardog was growling just outside the door.

Then, violently and without the preface of gradual approach—precisely as though horsemen had sprung from the earth—there clattered and beat past the front of the cabin a staccato thunder of wildly galloping hoofs and a rattle of scattered rocks. She felt an uncanny freezing of her marrow. Horses travel perilous and broken roads in that fashion only when their riders are in fatal haste.

As abruptly as the drumbeat had come it died again into silence, and there was no diminuendo of hoofbeats receding into distance. The thing was weird and ghostly. She had not noticed in the weariness of her arrival at the cabin that the road ran deep in sand to the corner of the fence and that after fifty yards of rough and broken rock it fell away again into another sound-muffling stretch. She knew only that she was thoroughly frightened, and that whatever the noise was, it proclaimed hot and desperate haste.

Yet even in her terror she had moved only to turn her head and had opened her eyes cautiously and narrowly.

There was no sound in the cabin now; not even the stertorous breath of a snore. The fire flickered faintly and occasionally sent up from its white bed of ashes a dying spurt, before which the darkness fell back a little for the moment.

She could see that Fletch McNash had half risen in his bed. His head was partly turned in an attitude of intent listening, and his pose was as rigid as that of a bird-dog frozen on a point. It had all been momentary, and as Juanita gazed she saw other figures stir uneasily, though no one spoke. The missionary lay still, but the woman's figure moved restlessly beneath the heaped-up comforter.

So, for a few moments, the strange and tense tableau held, and the girl, watching the householder's alert yet motionless pose, remembered him as he had hunched drunkenly over his plate a few hours ago. The two pictures were hard to reconcile.

Then, at some warning which her less acute ears failed to register, she saw Fletch McNash's right hand sweep outward toward the wall and come up gripping the rifle.

Still there was no word, but the eldest boy's head had risen from the pallet.

Keyed now to concert pitch, the girl held her body rigid, and through half-closed lids looked across the dim room. While she was so staring and pretending to sleep, there drifted from a long way off an insistent, animal-like yell with a peculiar quaver in its final note. She did not know that it was the famous McBriar rallying cry, and that trouble inevitably followed

fast in the wake of its sounding. She knew only that it fitted in with her childhood's conception of the Indian's warwhoop. But she did know that in an instant after it had been borne along the wind she had seen a thing happen which she would have disbelieved had she heard it from the lips of a narrator.

She saw in one breathing space the half-raised figure of Fletch McNash under the quilts of his bed, and that of young Jeb under the covers of his pallet. She saw in the next breathing space, with no realization of how it had happened, both of them crouched low at the center of the floor, the father's eyes glued to the front door, the son's to the back. The older man bent low, like a runner on his mark awaiting the starting signal. His right hand held the rifle at his front, his left lightly touched the floor with fingers spread to brace his posture, and his face was tensely upturned.

So, while she counted ten, father and son crouched in precisely similar poses, one covering the barred door at the front with a repeating rifle, the other seeming to stare through the massive timbers of that at the back with leveled pistol. No one spoke. No one moved, but the regular swelling breath of sleep had died, for every pair of lips in the place was holding its breath, bated.

Then came a fresh pounding of hoofs and scattering of gravel and a chorus of angry, incoherent voices sounded above the noise of flight—or was it pursuit? Whatever words were being shouted out there in the night were swallowed in the medley, except a wake of oaths that seemed to float behind.

The noise, like the other which had preceded it, died swiftly, but in the instant that it lasted Fletch McNash had lifted his left hand and brought his rifle to the "ready" and his son had instinctively thrust forward his cocked revolver.

For a full minute, perhaps, the girl in the bed had the picture of two figures bent low like bronze emblems of motionless preparation, yet not a syllable had been spoken, and when, from quite a distance beyond, there came the snap of a single shot, followed by the retort of a volley, they still nei-



She Could See That Fletch McNash Had Half Risen in His Bed.

ther spoke nor moved. But at last, as if by one impulse, they rose and turned to face each other.

Then, and then only, was there utterance of any sort inside the house.

In a voice so low that Juanita would not have heard it save that every sense was painfully alert, Fletch said to his son: "I reckon ther war's on again."

The boy nodded sullenly, and the father commanded in an almost inaudible undertone: "Lay down."

The boy went back to his pallet and the father to his bed. For a long time there was dead silence, and then one by one they took up again their chorus of snores. Tomorrow might bring chaos but tonight offered sleep. Still the girl lay gazing helplessly up at the rafters and wondering what things happened out there in the grim, uncommunicative silence of the slopes.

A little while ago she had been dreading what might come. Now, in an access of terror, she thought of what must come.

"Ther war's on." That was enough. Evidently there had been "hell" over there at the dance. She had reached the country just in time to see a new and sanguinary chapter open.

She would in all probability see people she actually knew, with whom she had spoken, and whose hands she had taken, the victims of this brutal blood-lust.

And in the face of such things these human beasts could sleep! But one was not sleeping, and after a while among the snoring slumberers Good Anse Talbott rose and knelt before the hearth. There were still a few glowing embers there, and as he bent and at last took the knotted hands away from his seamed face they cast a feeble light upon his features and upon the bare feet that twisted convulsively on the stone fireplace.

It was a tortured face, and as the girl watched him she realized for the first time the significance of the words "to wrestle in prayer." It suddenly came to her that she had never before seen a man really pray. For an hour the backwoods missionary knelt there,

pleading with his God for his unrepentant people.

Outside a single whippoorwill wailed plaintively, "These poor hills! These poor hills!"

## CHAPTER V.

In the lowlands morning announces itself with the rosy glow of dawn and uplifting shafts of light, but here in the hills of Appalachia even the sun comes stealing with surreptitious caution and veiled face, as if fearful of ambushade.

When Juanita opened her eyes, to find the tumbled beds empty save for herself, she told herself with a dismal heart that a day of rain and sodden skies lay ahead of her.

The dim room reeked with wet mists, and an inquisitive young rooster stalked jauntily over the puncheon floor, where his footfalls sounded in tiny clicks. It was a few minutes after five o'clock, and Juanita shivered a little with the clammy chill as she went over to the door and looked out.

Bending over a gushing spring at one corner of the yard in the unconscious grace of perfect naturalness, her sleeves rolled back and her dark hair tumbling, knelt the girl Dawn.

Juanita crossed the yard, and as she came near the younger girl raised a face still glistening with the cold water into which it had been plunged and glowing with shyness.

The older woman nodded with a smile that had captivated less simple subjects than Dawn and said: "Good morning. I think you and I are going to be great friends. I know we are if you will try to like me as much as I do you."

Then the girl from Philadelphia plunged her face, too, into the cold, living water, and raised it again, smiling through wet lashes.

"What makes ye like me?" Dawn suddenly demanded in a half-challenging voice.

"You make me like you," laughed Juanita.

The mountain girl held her eyes still in the unwavering steadiness of her race, then she said in a voice that carried an undertone of defiance:

"Ye hain't never seen me afore, an—" she broke off, then doggedly, "an' besides, I don't know nuthin'." "I mean to see you often after this," announced the woman from down below, "and the things you don't know can be learned."

A sudden eagerness came to the younger face and a sudden torrent of questioning seemed to hover on her lips, but it did not find utterance. She only turned and led the way silently back toward the house. When they were almost at the door Dawn hesitated, and Juanita halted with an encouraging smile. It was clear that the mountain girl found whatever she meant to say difficult, for she stood indecisive and her cheeks were hotly suffused with color, so that at last Juanita smilingly prompted: "What is it, dear?"

"Ye said—" began Dawn hastily and awkwardly, "ye said suthin' 'bout me a tryin' ter like ye. I—I don't hafta try—I does hit." Then, having made a confession as difficult to her shy taciturnity as a callow boy's first declaration of love, she fled abruptly around the corner of the house.

Juanita stood looking after her with a puzzled brow. This hard mountain reserve which is so strong that friends rarely shake hands, that fathers seldom embrace their children, and that the kiss is known only to courtship, was new to her.

At breakfast she did not see Dawn—the dryad had vanished!

During the meal no allusion was made to the happenings of last night, but the girl noticed that inside the door leaned the householder's "rifle-gun" and under young Jeb's armpit bulged the masked shape of a pistol-butt.

Young Jeb's face yesterday had been that of a boy, this morning it was the sullen face of a man confronting grim realities. Had Juanita been more familiar with the contemporary affairs of the community, she might have known that on many faces along Tribulation that morning brooded the same scowl from the same cause. The McBriar yell had been raised last night in the heart of the Havey country, and this morning brought the shame of a land invaded and dishonored.

Dawn did not reappear until Juanita had mounted and turned her mule's head forward. Then, as she was passing the dilapidated barn, the slim, calico-clad figure slipped from its door and intercepted her in the road, holding up a handful of queer-shaped roots.

"I lowed ye mought need these hyar," said the girl diffidently. Juanita smiled as she bent in her saddle to take the gift.

"Thank you, dear; what are they?"

"Hit's ginseng," Dawn assured her.

"Hit grows back thar in ther woods an' hit's got a powerful heap of virtue. Hit frisks ther speret an' drives away torment. Ef yer starts ter swoon agin, jest chaw hit."

Juanita repressed her amusement.

"You see, dear," she declared, "there's one very wonderful thing you know that I didn't know. And don't forget, when we meet again we are old friends."

Then, when she had mounted her mule, looking back over her shoulder, Juanita saw the figures of both Fletch and Jeb cross the fence at the far side of the yard and turn into the mountain thicket. Each carried a rifle cradled in his bent elbow.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Cannibal God.

Fijian cannibals worship a god named Mata Walo, who has eight stomachs, and is always eating.